

Conflict test what is truly important: paradise road assignment

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Conflict allows us to reflect on which is important in our lives. THE AGE Paradise Road (1997) Encountering conflict is an inevitable facet of human existence, which by definition is the opposition of intangible entities. From conflict individuals and societies may be challenged and furthered in terms of social and moral values and beliefs, as each comes to encounter the underlying and intangible elements of conflict and through this, humanity.

Based on the testimony of survivors, Bruce Beresford's feature film Paradise Road highlights the potential of conflict to catalyse the reevaluation of an individual's moral compass, the way in which one lives and the values that are important to their existence to be realised. The film portrays the story of a group of women who, having survived the bombing and sinking of their ship by the Japanese during their evacuation of Singapore, think that the "worst is over", but are yet to find that the toughest times are to come after their capture by the Japanese.

It is in these hellish prison camps where they face their harshest test of courage and survival, and show us their incredible will to live and what is really important ??? friendship, community spirit, and surprising attributes of beauty. When an individual, in the face of conflict, possesses the self-awareness to understand what conflict may teach them about themselves, then encounters with conflict may elicit what is truly important. The central character, Adrienne Pargiter, responds to the tragedy of Wing's death, through her belief in the healing power of music and her desire to draw the women closer in a bid to unify.

The women realise that the racial and class boundaries which divide them will only lead to conflict among each other, and the need for resolution of these differences if they are to survive. This act highlights to the importance of community, and through unification in the face of tribulation, humans are able to nourish hope and optimism amidst the direst of conditions to survive captivity, despair and dehumanisation. In the face of divergence, its ramifications can cause numerous individual to unify or diverge. Yet it is the amalgamation between individuals within a wider community which aids in the realisation of what is important to us.

The women, diverse in nationality, race and social status, against the will of their captors form the vocal orchestra. This decision sought to bring a sense of beauty and hope in the face of the squalor and deprivations given to them in the Japanese hell camps. It also exercised a freedom to choose beauty rather than despair in the face of the brutal constraints of the camp and the duress of their gaolers. Through “ just humming”, the vocal orchestra was essential in proving to the imprisoned women that during times of great stress and duress that they could rewrite their lives and escape into a world not bound by barbed wire and brutality.

Conflict offers the potential to test and prove one’s moral priorities; however some may stand steadfast by their beliefs and in turn become ignorant to the learning and realisations that conflict offers. While Paradise Road is ultimately about personal and collective triumph over adversity, the script never forgets that for everyone who has overcome seemingly impossible obstacles there are many that have fallen along the way, never to rise again.

By not forgetting these victims, Paradise Road instead stresses the consequences of isolation.

Segregation and reclusiveness in to one's self can cause further conflict. A highly negative response to conflict is shown in Mrs Tippler, a woman who becomes more critical and pessimistic and the women's stay in the camp continues. She grows spiteful and resentful and exacerbates the racial tensions amongst the group. Beresford shows us that the strain induced by conflict can be corrosive and detrimental to not only the individual but those around them.

Being captive is represented by a state of mind as much as it is by barbed wire fences and guard towers, and that one must be open to the support of others to escape the dangers of isolation. When encountering conflict, the individual nature of the response and learning is to be considered, and understanding this underlying personal nature of conflict is essential to the resolution of conflicts and maintenance of societies. Paradise Road does not just focus on the imprisoned victims of conflict but shows that everyone is capable of kindness.

Despite the brutal nature and the physical ferocity of the camps, the Japanese are disarmed by music. The women's aura of hope and resilience when performing their renditions, momentarily softens the heart of their vicious captors. Regardless of his cultural predisposition to despise "women, foreigners and prisoners", Sergeant Tomiashi is so moved by the power of their music that he is humbled and sees the women as humans for the first

time. His encounter with surprising beauty allows him to better understand to people he has been conditioned to detest.

Paradise Road painstakingly prevents from demonising the Japanese, instead showing the effects of conflict on the soldiers and guards, not only the women. The film succeeds in humanising the kinds of people who are often pictured as the brutal, faceless enemy. It gives a refreshing change to the stereotypical war movie often seen today and shows us what conflict reveals in not only the victims but the captor. In modern society today, conflict should be valued for its ability to allow people to face, test and prove their values and priorities and understand their validity and relevance to them personally.